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The Sages: Second Missionary Journey

Compiled by

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This is the final installment of the story of Esther and Sanford Sage, early missionaries to Sierra Leone. The first installment recounted the early life, preparation, and marriage of Esther and Sanford. The second installment told of their first missionary experiences in Africa. The couple returned home because of illness and this story picks up in the interim between the first and second missionary trips to Africa. Most of the information in these accounts of the Sages comes from the book "The Sages: 1880-1890" written by Mary Cay Carlson Wells and page references are to this book.

The year 1886 proved to be a difficult one for Esther and Sanford. The return home did allow him to recover his good health, but it came gradually. In the meantime the couple was in "no man's land." They were not "on furlough," nor were they on assignment. Consequently there was little or no income for the couple. From the perspective of the 21st century, their treatment by the denomination seems callous at best. But it must be remembered that in those days clergy did not have pensions, health care was totally the responsibility of the individual [or his or her family], and the idea of paid furloughs was in the future. So no one thought the denomination was slighting the Sages.

It is probable that the Sages might have been "under a cloud" at this time because of the accusation of mismanagement by Dr. Flickinger. Although Sanford appears to have been vindicated in this case, Dr. Flickinger might not have been interested in having the Sages return to Africa. It is important to note that when they did return to Sierra Leone, as will be seen below, it was not with the sponsorship of the United Brethren Board of Missions.

Apparently neither Esther nor Sanford continued their journals for most of 1886. At least Mary Cay Carlson Wells could not find them. Perhaps after the exciting years in Africa neither thought events at home were worth recording. Perhaps both were feeling uncertain about what their next steps were and did not want to record their doubts and fears. At the end of the year, however, Sanford did vent his frustration in his journal:

[I] have had some severe trials and have been most depressed and discouraged. I am almost at a loss to know what to do. Oh, this bitterness of soul. Why do not these trials help me flee to

the Saviour. [sic.] I am simply miserable. I dispise [sic.] my actions. I hate these evil thoughts. My God is there no relief. [sic.] (p. 203)

This certainly might have been the feelings of a man who felt abandoned by the Board of Missions. Esther felt the uncertainty just as vividly as did Sanford when she writes: "We cannot safely leave a work God has called us to do until we are just as sure that he calls us to leave it." (p. 203) Reading these thoughts, however, one is reminded of the sad reflections of Mother Theresa on not hearing the voice of God, and Martin Luther's "deep, dark, night of the soul," to realize that none of us is immune from such feelings at times in our lives.

But it did not take long for the light to dawn. In May, Sanford and Esther were appointed as missionaries to Africa by the American Missionary Association¹. On September 24, 1887 they left the United States, once again on the *Liberia*, and arrived in Sierra Leone on October 28th. Rev. R.N. and Lida West, old friends from seminary days, met the Sages on the boat in Freetown harbor. On this tour, the Sages were assigned to Rotifunk, located about 60 miles east of Freetown on the Bompeh River (further inland than Shenge). Tribal fighting kept the women in Freetown for a month while Sanford and West proceeded to Rotifunk.

The Rotifunk mission had been initiated by two incredibly brave and effective women, Miss Emily Beeken first, and then Mrs. M. M. Mair. When Mrs. Mair's health began to decline the Wests were sent to replace her. They continued the successful work of the two women and a few months after their initial arrival in Africa, the Sages visited Rotifunk on the occasion of the dedication of the chapel. But tribal

conflicts tended to plague the area until about the time of the arrival of the Sages in October 1887. By that time the British had taken the incursions of the Yonni seriously and stationed an adequate number of constables [police] in the area to control the violence.

The Wests were more interested in teaching and spent most of their time in that role. Sanford assumed the preaching responsibility and that meant traveling around to the various preaching stations and preaching many times each Sunday. Esther handled most of the housekeeping duties. But as illnesses fell each of them from time to time it was necessary for each to be a "jack of all trades."

One of the major challenges the missionaries faced in Sierra Leone was the treatment accorded women. Polygamy was common and women were treated as property with few if any rights. Young girls could be promised in marriage for a small down payment. Years later a final payment secured the girl who had no choice in the matter. From the outset the United Brethren missionaries tried to rectify this situation. In Shenge and Kooloong Station girls stayed in the mission house and were educated by Esther. One of the reasons Esther and Sanford were sent to Rotifunk was to assist the Wests in the construction of a girls' school.

The Sages' journals provide a great deal of detail concerning the construction of the building for the girls' school. Despite a number of setbacks, primarily delays in the arrival of key items for the building, it was finished by late November and dedicated on December 13, 1888. Because of the larger building, more girls could be admitted to the school.

When a girl was admitted to the school her parents had to sign a paper agreeing not to "commit" her for marriage until the age of 21 without the permission of the missionaries. Each girl was sponsored for between \$12 and \$20 a year by a person in the United States. These sponsors had the right to give each girl a "Christian" name. That is why so many of the African girls had American sounding names. These sponsored girls became part of the mission family. Like any family life was not always smooth. Esther records instances of disobedience, theft, unclean habits (eating dirt), and fighting among the girls. But on the whole Esther's journal records positive experiences with the girls.

Language problems often plagued the missionaries. Within the area of the United Brethren missions three native languages were spoken. Although the missionaries attempted to learn the most common language in their area, there was enough overlap between language groups to cause confusion from time to time. When students attended

school, they had to learn English as one must remember Sierra Leone was a British colony. Sanford apparently learned enough of the Temne language to read and translate it correctly. Perhaps his seminary study of Greek and Hebrew made this process easier.

But teaching, preaching, overseeing the farm, repairing buildings, and sometimes building new ones were not the only tasks for the male missionaries. Often they were called upon to act as mediators (not judges) in a disagreement or dispute between natives or at least in one case between the natives and the British. These might involve family squabbles, disputes over boundaries, or violations of local customs and traditions either by a native or by one of the members of the mission. Brother Gomer was well-known for his ability to mediate in these situations, but according to the Sages' journal Sanford was reasonably successful in this area as well.

In mid-1889 troubles with the Yonni led to increasing fear of war. Part of this was probably stimulated by a year of bad crop yields and food shortages. Sanford made at least one successful attempt to bring much needed rice to Rotifunk, but food shortages continued to exist. One interesting comment in the Sages' journals indicated that they had been warned not to write too much about the war scare to relatives back home. Either Esther, Sanford, or both believed the denominational leadership did not want such news to reach potential donors to the mission effort in the states. Such "censorship" was hardly unusual in the history of the denomination and was to some degree understandable.

While the Yonni tribe did attack some villages near Rotifunk it did not attack the mission station and in time life returned to normal. The unfortunate byproduct of this war scare was that farmers did not want to stay in their isolated huts and farm their land. Instead they returned to their villages where they could more easily defend themselves. Thus the food shortages were exacerbated. With the return to less stressful times, Sanford was able to build a wooden house, apparently for two new female missionaries (Ellen Groenendyke and Frances Williams) who arrived at Rotifunk on December 1, 1889. Work also was begun on a new school building that was not completed until June of 1890.

It is clear from Esther's journal that the schedule of the missionaries was heavy indeed. Arising before dawn and working well into the night was not uncommon. Saturday evening appeared to have been the only free evening of the week. In her journal Esther commented:

Whether you sit down to write or sew or even to catch a few moments rest or sleep (the latter is not often indulged in), someone will be calling for you—sometimes a few eggs for sale, or a bunch of greens or a bundle of wood, or a little cassava or any little produce raised by the people. . . (p. 261)

Early in 1890 Sanford and two Free Methodist missionaries planned a trip into the interior. They finally got started in March despite the sudden death of one of the Free Methodist missionaries. Sanford's journal recounted the contacts they had with native peoples on the trip, including a chief who took a liking to Sanford's gun. The chief wanted the gun and although San was not interested in giving it up, he decided discretion was the better part of valor and eventually parted with it for two goats and some "extra fine cloths." But the trip was an exhausting one and after visiting 50 towns and covering 350 miles the travelers returned home weak, weary, and hungry.

Somewhat out of character for what we might consider United Brethren missionaries, Sanford was usually well armed, either with a rifle, shotgun, or revolver. According to journal entries made by either Esther or Sanford, he used these weapons frequently to kill leopards or for self defense. Furthermore, punishment of school children was often administered via whippings or other forms of corporal punishment. It is unlikely that armed missionaries who whipped disobedient children was the image that got back to American churches and their children, but these were realities in the world of Sierra Leone in the late 19th century.

The summer of 1890 witnessed a powerful series of revivals in the area around Rotifunk, including Bompeh. Abolition, both of slavery and strong drink, was a constant theme in the messages of Revs. Sage and West. The emphasis on temperance was apparently strengthened by the arrival of Sisters Groenendyke and Williams who were strongly opposed to alcohol. They would leave any meeting or service where wine was used in holy communion. In one particular service Pa Sourrie, the major area chieftan, experienced his "final" conversation according to the Sages indicating that he had probably experienced good old Methodist "backsliding" on several previous occasions. An account of this series of meetings was written by Ellen Groenendyke and published in the *Women's Evangel*.

But much of the euphoria of the successful revivals was gradually dashed. The recurrent illnesses suffered by the missionaries accelerated during the

summer of 1890. Both of the Wests, Ellen and Frances, as well as Sanford and Esther suffered bouts of fever and lost weight. At one point Esther was down to almost 100 pounds (from the 120s) and wrote: "I am not strong at all and my back aches now that I can hardly sit up, more perhaps from overwork than anything else. I was lately brought to near the gates of death." (p. 276) Although she recovered to some degree, by late August, Sanford was sufficiently worried to take her to Freetown for medical attention. Before they left Rotifunk, Lida West advised Sanford to take their belongings because she believed the medical advice would be to send Esther home. That is what happened. By September, 1890—seven years after their marriage—Esther and Sanford were on their way back to Ohio. Their second missionary journey had come to an end. But what a glorious seven years it was!

This time there was no return to Sierra Leone. Both Sanford and Esther must have heard God's call to stand down from missionary service—maybe they considered the frequent health problems to be that command. Sanford itinerated in the Sandusky Conference and during the remainder of his career he and Esther served 17 churches. He also served as one of the presiding elders (conference superintendents) in the Sandusky Conference for a time. Just before turning 42, Esther gave birth to a daughter—Frances—for whom she kept a shroud—memories from the days in Sierra Leone when many missionary children did not survive. Frances did survive, however. Esther maintained her passion for missionary work the remainder of her life.

Sanford and Esther retired in 1923 and settled in Willard, Ohio, where they lived with Frances and her husband, Dr. Calvin Steiner. Esther lived until 1928 when she died at the age of 76. She and Sanford had been married for 45 years. Sanford lived five years longer than his wife and he died in 1933 at the age of 74. During his retirement years he served as an assistant pastor, taught a men's class, and enjoyed the company of his two granddaughters.

The illnesses suffered in Africa plagued both Esther and Sanford for the remainder of their lives and Mary Cay Carlson Wells' book indicates that Sanford retired because of health issues. At the time he was not yet 65, a relatively early time for retirement in that era when many ministers continued into their 70s (primarily because of lack of pensions or social security). Salaries were such that building up retirement savings was difficult for most United Brethren ministers and this might account for the situation in which after retirement the Sages lived with their daughter. Nonetheless, considering what

Sanford and Esther had experienced, they lived longer lives than most of the early missionaries.

Sadly much of the physical work of the Sages and the Wests² was undone by the Tax Hut War of 1898 which resulted in the deaths of seven United Brethren missionaries and the destruction of many of the buildings at Rotifunk built by Sanford. But Sanford and Esther, although saddened by the affair, continued their efforts to encourage support for United Brethren mission work in Sierra Leone. After the Tax Hut War nine native workers gathered the remaining members in the 62 towns served by the Rotifunk mission and continued the work. Within a short period of time replacements for the murdered missionaries were sent from the United States to support the work of the committed Christians of Sierra Leone.

In reviewing the journal entries and letters of the Sages some interesting observations stand out. Sanford's choice of a career appears to have been somewhat passive. He finished seminary with little clear idea of what to do afterwards. There is no indication that he asked for a pastoral appointment. Why Dr. Flickinger contacted Sanford to ask him if he would be willing to go to Sierra Leone is not clear. Certainly R.N. West, Sanford's roommate, was a major force in influencing him, and perhaps it was West who suggested to Dr. Flickinger that he consider Sanford for a missionary assignment.

Esther, too, did not appear to have any career goal in mind after graduation. She did not come to seminary until she was in her late 20s (she was seven years older than Sanford), and apparently did not seek a career as a pastor. While the United Brethren were not entirely opposed to female preachers, the few that had done it were evangelists and women were not assigned as itinerants until the 1890s. Thus had she chosen the route of an itinerating pastor the conditions she would have faced would probably have been more difficult than going to Sierra Leone.

Of the two, Sanford appeared to have been more prone to falling into despair or depression over reverses in the mission work and in life than did his wife. Esther seemed to put a positive face on almost everything even when writing during a time of debilitating illness. That the two of them shared a deep love for God and for each other is abundantly clear in their writings. Both of these relationships were the dominant forces in keeping them going amidst the trials and tribulations during their years in Sierra Leone.

One of the remarkable aspects of Sanford's and Esther's journals is the lack of fear and trepidation they had in going to and in living in Sierra Leone for

seven years. While one might understand the desire to keep these fears out of letters to relatives and friends, such thoughts do not enter their journals either. Here, one surmises, each might be more willing to write his or her true feelings as Sanford does on several occasions. But fear does not appear primarily because they believed that in doing God's work they would be protected from harm as particularly Esther writes several times. Given the real dangers we know they faced that is a remarkable tribute to their faith in God and their belief that they were where they were for a divine reason.

In the latter part of the 20th century a significant amount of criticism has been leveled at the missionary movement of groups like the United Brethren. They have been accused of being examples of American colonialism and arrogant examples of the belief that our job was to civilize the savages of Africa and other "backward" peoples of the world. Much of this I believe is a good example of judging the past by the morality of the present. While some of this criticism is true, and some of this belief in the superiority of the American way is present in the journal entries of the Sages, their commitment to their work and the sacrifices they underwent go well beyond the level of arrogance often attributed to missionaries by their critics. It was not the drive to "civilize" these people that drove them, it was the drive to bring Christ to them and their belief that God ordained them to do it that drove them.

Indeed in the 20th century the missionary activity of the United Brethren and the Evangelical Church (later the Evangelical United Brethren) shows little desire to maintain a control over these missions and their people. Instead the dominant philosophy was to develop indigenous churches led by the natives with the American brethren available to assist if requested. In this respect the EUB appeared to be more sensitive to native cultures and less interested in any colonial domination than were the Methodists.³

J. Steven O'Malley's history of the mission work of the EUB Church cites the work in Sierra Leone as among the most successful undertaken by the denomination—or any denomination for that matter. He cites many late 20th century leaders of Sierra Leone who credit much of the early success of Sierra Leone as an independent country to the work of UB and EUB missionaries, and particularly the influence of schools like Albert Academy and the Harford Academy for Young Women that did much to overcome tribal rivalries in the country.⁴ Undoubtedly the Sages were a major force in the early history of the Sierra Leone mission that led to

its designation as “the crown jewel” of EUB overseas missions by O’Malley.

What then of the Sages? They are mentioned, but not prominently, in the standard denominational histories.⁵ Perhaps Mary Wells’ book and this summary of it will help those who read these entries appreciate the dedicated work the Sages, the Wests, and other early missionaries did. Furthermore, the work of the descendants of the Sages in preserving their family stories is a fine example of the importance of family histories. Even if this is not the story of your family, it is important to have some understanding of the shoulders on which we stand—the trials, tribulations, and triumphs experienced by those who have gone before us.

1. The American Missionary Society has a long and distinguished history. Comprised primarily of Protestant women’s groups, it was a leading force in assisting Africans living in the United States and abroad in Africa. The United Brethren women’s missionary group worked with the American Missionary Society and it was this group, and not the United Brethren Board of Missions, that assigned and supported the Sages on their second

missionary journey. It is puzzling why the UB Board did not return the Sages to Sierra Leone after they recovered from their illnesses. Although I have no clear evidence of this, my guess is that either the financial situation in the denomination or the “bad feelings” remaining from Dr. Flickinger’s accusation of financial mismanagement by Sanford precluded further support for the Sages.

2. Rev. R.N. West died in Sierra Leone of illness in February 1894. He is buried near the chapel at Rotifunk.

3. See the article by Robert Harman in the *Telescope-Messenger* titled “Reflections on World Mission in the EUB, Methodist, and United Methodist Traditions” (Vol. 22, #2, Summer 2012).

4. J. Steven O’Malley, *On the Journey Home: The History of Mission of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, 1946-1968* (New York, NY, 2003), pp. 62-64

5. The Sages are recognized in Daniel Berger’s, *History of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (Dayton, Ohio, 1897), pp. 442 and 467 and in A. W. Drury’s, *History of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (Dayton, Ohio, 1924), p. 592. But J. Bruce Behney and Paul H. Eller’s, *The History of the Evangelical United Brethren Church* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1979), the most recent history of the denomination and its predecessors, does not mention them at all.

EUB Mergers

by

Boyd A. Blumer

The response to any institutional merger is shaped by the perceptions of the individual experiencing it. In 1983 I presented a paper to the Jurisdictional Archives and History Conference tracing the influence and effect of the Germans who migrated from Russia into the Dakotas in the 19th Century. They arrived after the best land was taken and often appeared to be “out-of-step” with life in America. Their language and tendency to be “clannish” made for barriers to communication and relationships with non-Germans. Their experiences in Russia, often repeated in America, made them suspicious of government and of other people.

The major growth of the Evangelical Church in the Dakotas came from the German-Russian immigrants. A majority of the Evangelical pastors spoke German and were thus able to relate immediately to the immigrants. Many of the immigrants had a Lutheran or Roman Catholic background. Dakota Evangelicals had confirmation classes before they had Sunday school classes. Confirmation was to teach the faith. Sunday school was to teach the English language.

In the heart of these immigrant settlements, the Lehr Tabernacle was built in south central North Dakota. Summer revivals at this site would last a month or more. It was a great time of fellowship for lonely and isolated people. When I was beginning the ordination process in the 1950s, the veteran preachers would find a time and place to tell their “war stories” of month-long revivals and bewail that it was no longer happening because the church was getting too large and too liberal.

Another development of the church was the “Summer Assembly.” This was a week-long meeting of women and youth on a college campus. It was a combination of an annual meeting for the women’s society and the gathering of youth. There would be classes in the morning, sports in the afternoon, and preaching/revival services in the evening. This event produced many commitments not only to Jesus Christ, but also to the ministry and to mission fields.

The Evangelical Church was the first church in the Dakotas to develop a summer camping program for elementary and junior high youth. It also followed the format of classes, sports, and preaching. The youth would be involved in music, drama, and art for

the evening services. A strong group of men and women who were excellent evangelistic preachers "ran" the conference. The leader was Dr. A.G. Martin a district superintendent who held the office for 26 years.

My father was a delegate to the Annual Conference when the merger of the Evangelicals and the United Brethren was decided. I recall my father reporting suspicions about the United Brethren and wondering if the church was getting too large and liberal. I mention all of this as background to my experiences in the denomination.

From my observation, the Dakotas was a "battleground" concerning which seminary to attend. Paul Petticord was an evangelist at several of the "Summer Assemblies." He used this as an opportunity to recruit students for his seminary (Western Theological Seminary). I attended Westmar College and there were frequent discussions among the pre-theological students about which seminary to attend. Those from Minnesota and Iowa favored Evangelical Theological Seminary (ETS in Naperville, Illinois), but those from the Dakotas, Montana, and Nebraska, were often torn about which seminary to choose. I do not recall that Paul Petticord ever came to Westmar, but there were members of the conference Board of Ministry who came to visit and they would mention the alternative possibility of attending Western Theological Seminary (WES). Their main point was that the denomination was becoming too liberal.

I attended ETS and while there I wrote a paper for an Evangelism course that would come to "slap me in the face" later in life. I compared the statistics from the annual conferences of the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Montana, Oregon, and Washington in five categories: worship attendance, church school attendance, conversions, members received by profession of faith, and members received by transfer. The conferences with preferences for ETS had more positive statistics than the conferences that preferred WES. The states with WES leanings had a lower percentage of church members and thus a greater opportunity for evangelism. My conclusion was that the conferences of Montana, Oregon, and Washington that favored WES had a theology that did not work.

My process of ordination was interesting. My only meeting with the Board of Ministry was during the Annual Conference session at which I was to be interviewed and recommended for ordination. In those days if one graduated successfully from an accepted seminary that was about it for the process. Usually these interviews lasted about 30 minutes.

Mine lasted two hours. One member confronted me with my evangelism paper. The Board became involved in a heated discussion about what questions would be appropriate to ask me. I did not respond to a single question of substance.

At the annual conference session each candidate was voted on by paper ballot and the results of the vote were announced. I was the only one of the seven who was accepted and ordained to receive negative votes. The announcement of the vote still "stings" to this day in my memory.

We were appointed to two small churches in central North Dakota. The churches were the smallest in size and the lowest in salary of the available appointments. Each had about 25 members. In our four years there in one church no members were added, while in the other the membership more than doubled. In the one that grew we were theologically compatible, in the other the members were theologically antagonistic to me.

Frustrated, and with the impertinence of youth, I wrote a letter to the bishop, the district superintendents, and the Council of Administration asking for an investigation into why 35 men had left the conference in the prime years of their ministry. The same day my district superintendent received the letter, he drove 200+ miles to chastise me. I was told to write a letter to each person apologizing for my ignorance and lack of love for Jesus Christ and the Church. Earlier in the year he mentioned I would be considered for another appointment. I was now to be punished, presumably so that I would learn humility and obedience. At my present appointment the two churches were 25 miles apart, on my proposed two-point charge the churches would be 50 miles apart with a lower salary.

Fortunately the other district superintendent said he had a place for me which was a one-point charge. Bishop Harold Heininger agreed. Although the chastising district superintendent was not happy that I was being rewarded for my "sins," I got the one-charge appointment. Furthermore, Bishop Heininger's letter in response to my letter was pastoral and conciliatory. He mentioned that there were many factors involved in pastors leaving the conference that I did not know about, but he appreciated my concern for the leadership of the church and conference. I received several other letters of support from those who commended me for my bravery, but also warned that there would be repercussions.

When I wrote the letter I feared I would need to leave the conference and possibly the ministry and this I did not want to do. I felt a strong call to the

ministry. I met with a helpful pastoral counselor who gave me a vivid description of my actions: I had grabbed a tiger by the tail. The "tiger" being this family political block. When one grabs a tiger by the tail one can expect to be pawed and scratched. Then the counselor asked "Was I sorry that I did it?" "Would I do it again?" I responded with a "no" to the first question and a "yes" to the second. But at least in the future I would be more aware of the costs.

As my career progressed the division within the conference become more pronounced and vocal. It came to a focus about 1960 when elections were made for the coming four years. One of the first votes was to re-elect a trustee for another four-year term to Westmar College. Although the ballot listed no one in opposition, the sitting trustee lost to a write-in candidate. That vote sent shock waves through the conference and indicated that the conservative forces were ready to take over conference leadership. They had done their homework and they were organized. I no longer recall the issues, but floor debate was often heated. On the first evening of annual conference Bishop Heininger called several of us to meet with him and he "chastised" us, as only he could, asking where we were when he was on the "hot seat."

By then I was aware that merger with the Methodists was almost certain. At my new appointment in South Dakota the EUB and Methodist churches were two blocks apart. I began serving both churches. In 1966 I worked out a plan of unification in anticipation of the 1968 merger. There would be one administrative board for both churches. The combined worship service met in one building and the combined church school met in the other. We maintained a separate Board of Trustees and I kept separate "books" in order to make the appropriate reports to each conference. In 1970 a new church was

built. We were the only ones in the Dakotas to unite the churches of the former denominations and build a new building.

When the vote was taken for merger it was uncertain which way the Dakotas Conference would go. Several pastors who were opposed to the merger had left the conference by this time. A few left the active ministry while some went to other conferences—mostly to the Montana or Oregon/Washington conferences. During the voting session Bishop Heininger gave an impassioned sermon. His theme was that he did not want to be a part of a church struggling in the back waters of life and faith, but he wanted to be in the middle of the stream that was going somewhere. We had three minutes of silent prayer. The Bishop offered a short prayer and then asked all those who favored the proposal to stand. Then all those who opposed the proposal were asked to stand. I believe this was a master stroke as about 90% favored the merger.

To some degree one of the fears of some opposed to merger, and some who favored it, did occur. When the actual merger of the conferences took place the EUB's were swallowed up. Only two were chosen for any leadership position. One was named a district superintendent and I was named chairperson of the Conference Committee on Camping, not a prestigious position or one anyone sought. At the time of merger the church I was serving was the fifth largest in the conference, after merger it was the 15th largest in the district.

After the merger I served additional churches across the conference. I served one term as a district superintendent and during my last two years I was the Director of the Tree of Life Ministry on the Rosebud Reservation, a Volunter-In-Missions destination.

From the Editor

The membership form is on the back page of this issue. It will be easier, however, to renew your membership via the United Seminary web-site. To do so go to <http://united.edu/telescope-messenger-newsletter/>. Click on "Subscribe."

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